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One unborn
scheme
[invented by
Dr. Seuss and
his friend
Hugh Troy]
was to launch
a private
detective
agency named
Surely,
Goodness, and
Mercy. Its slo-
gan was to be
biblical: "Will
follow you all
the days of
your life."

JUDITH
AND NEIL
MORGAN

*Dr. Seuss and Mr.
Geisel* (New York:
Random House,
1995), p. 73.

GERTRUDE
STEIN

I have a weak-
ness for Iowa.
Iowa is entirely
different from
the others.

[The American writer James] Thurber was a menace
in one respect. He was a smoker, and because of his
blindness he kept putting out his cigarette on our
furniture. I used to stand next to him with an ash-
tray, and when he was ready to smash the cigarette
out, I would place the ashtray in front of him like
an outfielder with a baseball glove.

ART BUCHWALD *I'll Always Have Paris* (New York:
G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1996), p. 23.

GEORGE WILL

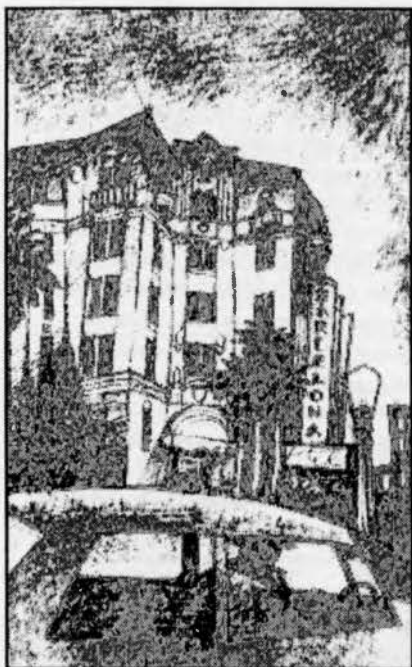
A committee is a cul-de-sac into
which ideas are lured to be quiet-
ly strangled.

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Ballast is an acronym for Books Art Language
Logic Ambiguity Science and Teaching, as well
as a distant allusion to *Blast*, the short-lived
publication founded during World War I by
Wyndham Lewis, the Vorticist artist and
writer. *Ballast* is mainly a pastiche of astonish-
ing passages from books, magazines, diaries
and other writings. Put differently, it is a jour-
nal devoted to wit, the contents of which are
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provoking.

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LEFT
Pencil
drawing
by Iowa-based
illustrator
**GARY
KELLEY**
(1999).

[Elihu Vedder, an American expatriate painter in Italy] lived on a bare height somewhere in the fields of central Capri above the sea, and showed us his device for ridding his studio of flies. The screen door at the entrance was arranged in the usual two panels, one above, one below, a cross-piece at the center. But this cross-piece was set an inch back from the wire mesh, above and below, these edges thus remaining free.

"Flies always want to get out," he explained to us, "and will fly to the screen and the light of day. But we prevent them from escaping by barring the exits. I leave a space for them. Thus I don't have flies." And he didn't, not many.

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS
The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams
(New York: Random House, 1951),
pp. 120-121.

[The American painter John Singer] Sargent is said to have had a screen in his studio, behind which he retired at intervals to put out his tongue at his opulent sitters and shake his fist at them. Having relieved his feelings in that way he emerged smiling and no one was a penny the worse.

**SYDNEY
COCKERELL**
quoted in Wilfrid
Blunt, *Cockerell*
(New York: Alfred
A. Knopf, 1965), p.
264.

FRAN LEBOWITZ

If thine enemy offend thee, give
his child a drum.

At the core of his [Dr. Seuss's] spirit was a child's sense of fun and curiosity. He took it to Dartmouth College, to Oxford and through the Great Depression as he struggled to learn who he might become, and it sustained him through those last days in 1991 when [on his deathbed] he looked up into [his wife] Audrey's anxious face, smiled and asked, "Am I dead yet?"

JUDITH
AND NEIL
MORGAN
*Dr. Seuss and
Mr. Geisel* (New
York: Random
House, 1995), p.
xix.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Richard Hendel, *On Book Design* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1998). ISBN 0-300-07570-7. When Henry David Thoreau made a complete list of each and every possession he had at Walden Pond, he curiously omitted one thing: He forgot the pencil that enabled him to make the list. Successful book design, says Richard Hendel, often goes as unnoticed and unappreciated as Thoreau's pencil. It is, as Beatrice Warde once said, a transparent goblet, so that (writes Hendel) "the very invisibility of its design is to its credit." Hendel should know, having worked for many years as a highly regarded book designer, most recently with the University of North Carolina Press. Thankfully, this is not a prosaic instructional manual—"it is a book about how books are designed," he cautions, "not a book about how to design books"—but a medley of honest reflections about how book designers see, think, and feel. Written by the author and eight other American and British designers, it is illustrated by 110 black and white examples, among them several pieces by Iowa-born designer Merle Armitage and the University of Nebraska's Richard Eckersley, two of the century's most inventive (yet unheralded) book designers. With surprising candor, the text asks: How do book designers get their ideas? What do they worry about? How did they approach a particular book? And what difference does it all make? After all, confides Hendel, prize-winning book designs are largely unappreciated, cost more to produce, and are rarely available in bookstores. "There isn't any correlation between what books look like and how they sell," he laments. "Design seems to make no difference." Of particular interest is a section about the design of *this* book, which led us to wonder how well it will sell, whether bookstores will carry it, and (hopefully, because it has much to offer) the extent to which it might inspire other, younger book designers.

STANLEY ELKIN I lay awake at night flipping the channels of my attention.	EUROPEAN PROVERB The blind have eyes in their fingers.
--	--

MERLE ARMITAGE

To attempt to make art understandable and appealing to the people is to take from it the very elements that make [it] art. Bring a thing down to the level of popular understanding, and you bring it down below the timberline of esthetic worth.

P. T.

BARNUM

Every crowd
has a silver lining.

1938 ****EDITED AND
****DESIGNED BY
MERLE ARMITAGE
WITH ARTICLES BY

GEORGE GERSHWIN

PAUL WHITEMAN • OLIN DOWNES • WALTER DAMBOSCH
GEORGE GERSHWIN • MERLE ARMITAGE • OTTO H. KAHN
ARNOLD SCHOENBERG • WILLIAM DALY • HAROLD ARLEN
OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN II • SAMMY HOUGH • DAVID EWEN
NINETTE KUTNER • LESTER BONAHEUR • ISAAC GOLDBERG
ERMA TAYLOR • GILBERT Seldes • J. ROSAMOND JOHNSON
RUDY VALLEE • LEONARD LIEBOW • ALEXANDER STEINERT
ALBERT HENRI TENDREY • JEROME KERN • DUBOSE KEYWARD
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EVA SAWYER • FERD. GROFF • LOUIS DANZ • TONY DUNCAN
BEVERLEY NICHOLS • IRVING BERLIN • S. M. BEHRMAN
GEORGE ANTHEL • IRA GERSHWIN • SERGE ROUSSEVITZKY



LONGMANS, GREEN & CO. LONDON • NEW YORK • TORONTO

[Bret] Harte had arrived in California in the fifties, 23 or 24 years old, and had wandered up into the surface diggings of the camp at Yreka, a place which had acquired its curious name—when in its first days it much needed a name—through an accident. There was a bakeshop with a canvas sign which had not yet been put up but had been painted and stretched to dry in such a way that the word BAKERY, all but the B, showed through and was reversed. A stranger read it wrong end first, YREKA, and supposed that that was the name of the camp. The campers were satisfied with it and adopted it.

SAMUEL LANGHORNE
CLEMENS

The Autobiography of Mark Twain.
Charles Neider, ed. (New York:
Harper and Brothers, 1959), p. 124.

ABOVE

Title-page spread
from *George
Gershwin*, edited
and designed by
Iowa-born book
designer
MERLE
ARMITAGE
(1938).

DOROTHY
PARKER

But I am old;
and good and
bad
Are woven in a
crazy plaid.

ANON

The modern kitchen is where the pot calls the kettle chartreuse.

So it seemed to be artists I met who had the freedom of choice that seemed to me the best way to live. They had the freest thinking. They would laugh at more strange and silly things. They would collect a pebble from the beach. They wouldn't have to have a tea set behind glass.

STEPHANIE BEACHAM in Remar Sutton and Mary Abbott Waite, eds., *The Common Ground Book: A Circle of Friends* (Latham NY: British American Publishing, 1992), p. 114.

JOSEPH JOUBERT

Never cut what you can untie.



RIGHT

Face made entirely of letterforms by AARON PETERSEN (1999).

She [the poet Hilda Doolittle] asked me if when I started to write I had to have my desk neat and everything in its place, if I had to prepare the paraphernalia, or if I just sat down and wrote.

I said I liked to have things neat.

Ha, ha!

She said that when she wrote it was a great help, she thought and practiced it, if taking some ink on her pen, she'd splash it on her clothes to give her a feeling of freedom and indifference toward the mere means of the writing.

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (New York: Random House, 1951), pp. 68-69.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Mitchell G. Ash, *Gestalt Psychology in German Culture 1890-1967: Holism and the Quest for Objectivity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995). ISBN 0-521-47540-6. Gestalt psychology was founded by three German psychologists (Max Wertheimer, Kurt Koffka, and Wolfgang Köhler) in 1910 in Frankfurt. Reestablished after World War I at the University of Berlin, it flourished from the 1930s into the 1960s, then faded as its leaders aged and its major findings were absorbed by mainstream psychology. Today, the only surviving Berlin-trained gestaltist is the 95-year-old art theorist Rudolf Arnheim (author of *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye*), who is still actively writing. Gestalt theory was and is important to different people for different reasons. In German, the word for "design" is *gestalt*, and one reason for its appeal to artists, architects, and graphic designers is that it provides scientific validation of age-old esthetic principles. For those who have gained from gestalt theory, whether artists, scientists, or psychologists, this is an invaluable, interesting book. As the first comprehensive history of the movement, it covers a wide range of material, beginning at the turn of the century with Carl Stumpf, Christian von Ehrenfels, and others who set the stage; moving on to the Berlin Psychological Institute, and the numerous teachers and students who left before and during World War II; and concluding in the 1960s, when Germany was still divided, with the fate of the few who preferred to remain.

For a long time I had a pet squirrel, Susie. She would exhibit the ultimate expression of friendship and trust in the animal world: when I would give her anything to eat, Susie would turn her back on me and eat without facing me.

JERRY PRESTON in Remar Sutton and Mary Abbott Waite, eds., *The Common Ground Book: A Circle of Friends* (Latham NY: British American Publishing, 1992), p. 65.

"A man named Power," said Cockerell, "gave me 500 pounds to buy rugs for the Fitzwilliam [Museum, which Cockerell directed]. I said it was not enough, and he sent me another 500 pounds. A little later I wrote to him again: 'There is a sad lack of rugs in my Museum; I want more money.' He sent me another 500 pounds, saying: 'Go to hell! But before you go, cash this check.'"

WILFRID BLUNT
Cockerell (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), pp. 142-143.

D. H.

LAWRENCE

If you try to nail everything down in the novel, either it kills the novel, or the novel gets up and walks away with the nail.



ABOVE Pencil drawing by Iowa-based illustrator GARY KELLEY (1999).

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED Willi Kunz, *Typography: Macro- and Microaesthetics* (Switzerland: Niggli, 1998 / Available from Willi Kunz Associates, 2112 Broadway, New York NY 10023 / E-mail <wkany@aol.com>). ISBN 3-7212-0348-8. In design textbooks, it is often said that "form follows function," but in many cases, the form becomes dominant and obscures the message or function, as happens far too frequently, some people say, in experimental postmodern typography. This book, which was written by a Swiss-trained modernist, professes that function and form should be fused, that design is essentially always a search for a balance between legibility and readability, utility and beauty, effect and affect, and so on. If that balance is unattainable, advises the author, "it is more appropriate to adhere to the basic typographic principles that stress function than to resort to unbridled self-expression." Those principles—which are set out briefly and very clearly in the text, then borne out by dozens of rigorous works (posters, logos, page layouts), nearly all by the author—must be applied on two levels of attention: From a *macro*, big picture, or generalized view (as if looking through the wrong end of telescope); and from a *micro*, or close-up, particular view. Each level is essential for its own reasons: "Macroaesthetics capture the readers' initial attention," explains Kunz, "and lead them to the more complex microaesthetic level." In the end, the finest, most compelling evidence of the author's method are the quality, clarity, and completeness of this very book, which he wrote, designed, illustrated, and is now the American distributor of. Of recent design books, this is one of the most attractive and convincing, and would be an inspiring volume to own and to use in a graphic design classroom.

King Yuan of Sung was having a painting session. All the artists had come; they bowed and remained standing, licking their brushes and preparing the ink. Half were still outside. One artist came late, sauntering in. He made the usual bow, but did not join the others in line and went straight inside. The king asked someone to see what he was doing. He had stripped off his gown and was seated bare-bodied. "There's a true painter!" said the king.

CHUANG-TSE quoted in Lin Yutang, *The Chinese Theory of Art* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1967), p. 22, which accounts for the phrase *chieh-yi pan-p'o* (seated unbuttoned), "a common idiom for describing the untrammelled mood of an artist at work."

What is so good is that you can be gentle to Iowa. Iowa is gentle.

GERTRUDE STEIN in a letter to Carl Van Vechten, dated 25 August 1924, regarding his book, *The Tattooed Countess*, in Edward Burns, editor, *The Letters of Gertrude Stein and Carl Van Vechten* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 105.

One of my most vivid memories of P.S. 35 is of a bully named Sam Morelli. Sam looked like a gorilla and attended a parochial school called St. Gerard's. He got out earlier in the afternoon, in time to wait for me by the P.S. 35 playground gate.

This is how the dialogue went:

Sam: "Hey, Jew."

Me: "Yes sir."

Then he would smack me on the nose and it would start to bleed. This went on for some time—at least until Sam graduated and went off to Catholic high school.

The years went by and I had forgotten much of the trauma of my youth when a little old couple came into the city room of the *Paris Herald Tribune*.

"We're Sam Morelli's parents," they said. "And he told us that if we got to Paris to be sure and look you up. He still talks about the wonderful times you used to have when you were kids in Hollis."

I swear my nose started to bleed again.

ART BUCHWALD *Leaving Home* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1993), pp. 76-77.

Must have eyes tested. Today I found myself making enticing cooing sounds to what I took to be a rather pale pigeon on the lawn outside my study. It turned out to be a knuckle-bone left by one of the dogs.

ALEC GUINNESS *My Name Escapes Me: The Diary of a Retiring Actor* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1997), p. 27.

The name of the boys [two brothers in his grade school] was Levin. We had a collective name for them which was the only really large and handsome witticism that was ever born in that Congressional district. We called them "Twenty-two"—and even when the joke was old and had been worn threadbare we always followed it with the explanation, to make sure that it would be understood, "Twice Levin—twenty-two."

SAMUEL LANGHORNE CLEMENS *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*. Charles Neider, ed. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), p. 77.

RECOMMENDED Richard L. Cleary, *Merchant Prince and Master Builder: Edgar J. Kaufmann and Frank Lloyd Wright* (Pittsburgh PA: Heinz Architectural Center / Distributed by University of Washington Press, 1999). ISBN 0-880390036-0. Frank Lloyd Wright advised in his autobiography that "no home should ever be on a hill"; instead, it should be "of the hill, belonging to it." Just as gestalt theory described the holistic connections between figures and backgrounds, Wright emphasized the interdependence of an architectural structures and their surroundings. It is said that he always decided the site before considering a building's style, its spatial orientation, or the materials with which to build it. Of all his projects, there may be no better example of that than Fallingwater (c. 1938), a small but elaborate home in the woods (commissioned by a wealthy Pittsburgh department store owner named Edgar J. Kaufmann) in which the building is embedded in the landscape, making it inseparable from the waterfall, woods, and cantilevered rock ledges of its location. While much has been written about Fallingwater as a completed structure, less has been said about its preparatory drawings, the friendship between merchant prince and master builder, and the dozen projects that Wright and the Kaufmanns intended to build (few of which were ever realized) from 1934 until the architect's death in 1959. This is the full-color catalog for an exhibition of fifty of the more than 600 Wright drawings for projects commissioned by Kaufmann, which opened on 10 April and continues through 3 October 1999 at the Heinz Architectural Center at the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh.



Others have tried to make background foreground, but you have made foreground background, and our foreground is our background.

GERTRUDE STEIN in a letter to Carl Van Vechten, dated late August 1923, in Edward Burns, editor, *The Letters of Gertrude Stein and Carl Van Vechten* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 86-87.



LEFT
Pencil drawing (top) by Iowa-based illustrator GARY KELLEY (1999). The bottom image is a negative of the same drawing, produced by computer.

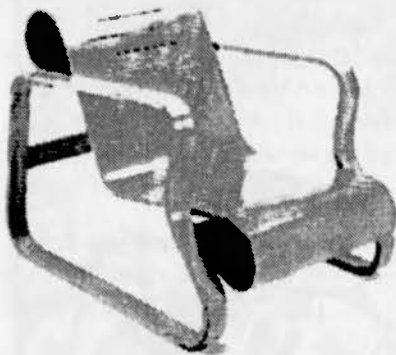
HENRY "HANK" OETTINGER

[80-year-old Chicago typesetter, interviewed in Studs Terkel, *Coming of Age*] There is only one more thing I want to do as the time is running out. I want to win the lottery, buy three ships, man them with American Indians, and send them over to discover Italy.

Because I cried so much [as a child], I used to think that God should have given me windshield wipers on my eyes instead of eyelashes.

SONYA FRIEDMAN in Remar Sutton and Mary Abbott Waite, eds., *The Common Ground Book: A Circle of Friends* (Latham NY: British American Publishing, 1992), p. 35.

JULIAN BARNES
Does history repeat itself[?]...
History just burps, and we taste again the raw onion sandwich it swallowed centuries ago.



ABOVE Molded plywood and birch chair designed by ALVAR AALTO for the Paimio Sanatorium (c1932).

RECOMMENDED *Alvar Aalto: Technology and Nature*. VHS color video. 59 minutes. (Produced by Oy Yleisradio / Distributed by Films for the Humanities and Sciences, Box 2053, Princeton NJ 08543 @ 800/257-5126; website <www.films.com>). As a young man, Finnish architect and furniture designer Alvar Aalto (1898-1976) had difficulty deciding whether to be a painter or an architect; and while he chose the latter, he was forever drifting back toward a less severe, more gestural approach to design, toward a "softened functionalism." This interesting—if far too conventional—view of his life was assembled from historic photographs; film clips, including his own home movies and experimental films; on-site tours to his architectural designs (e.g., the Paimio Sanatorium, Baker Hall at MIT, and the Mt. Angel Abbey Library in Oregon); and a visit to a factory to see his bentwood chairs produced. There are also brief interviews with his daughter, his second wife, and a handful of associates, including architects, historians, patrons, and collectors. Also mentioned are traditions that contributed to his mature design style, including Neo-Classicism, Gothic Revival, Japanese, and the concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art), in which, as an architect, he was responsible for the design of nearly all aspects of a building, including chairs, lamps, glassware, and doorknobs.

The raising of Lazarus from the dead is the subject of today's Gospel. The current sub-super-market translation has Christ asking, "Where have you put him?"—as if Lazarus might be a basket, and later, "Lazarus, here! Come out!"—as if calling a terrier digging in a rabbit warren.

ALEC GUINNESS *My Name Escapes Me: The Diary of a Retiring Actor* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1997), p. 135.

OF INTEREST John Maeda, *Design By Numbers* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1999). ISBN 0-262-13354-7. This is both a book and an interactive tutorial in computer programming for artists and designers. While it is now common for printed books to include CD-ROMs, this one has instead its own website <<http://dbn.media.mit.edu>>, where free software, called DBN (Design By Numbers), can be accessed, downloaded, and used by anyone with a JAVA-enabled browser. Using the book and website in combination, it is the intention of the author (who heads the Aesthetics and Computation group at MIT) that designers, even those who are "mathematically challenged," might quickly acquire "the skills necessary to write computer programs that are themselves visual expressions," and, as a consequence, "come to appreciate the computer's unique role in the future of the arts and design." Unfortunately, the layout of the book is so unexceptional (particularly the dust jacket, which might have been used in a powerful way) that it is unlikely to convert any graphic designers, who create far more complex forms intuitively, with little or no knowledge of programming. As a result, it may only reach those who need it least, meaning those who are already straddling the line between art and mathematics, between graphic design and computer programming.

AN AIS NIN It is the function of art to renew our perception. What we are familiar with we cease to see. The writer shakes up the familiar scene, and as if by magic, we see a new meaning in it.

**ART
BUCHWALD**
(Leaving Home)

What made him [his therapist, Dr. Robert Morse] unique among the psychiatrists I have known is that he stretched out on his couch and the patient sat in the chair. Morse would stare at the ceiling as he listened to my story. Occasionally he would nod his head—but he rarely looked at me.

**GEORGE
ADE**
One man's poison ivy is another man's spinach.

FRANKLIN

P. JONES

Experience
enables you to
recognize a
mistake when
you make it
again.

JOSEPH

JOUBERT

To teach is to
learn twice.

[When Sammy "The Bull"

Gravano agreed to cooperate
with the FBI in prosecuting John
Gotti and other members of the
Gambino crime family, an initial
meeting was arranged between
Gravano and a federal agent
named Bruce Moaw. The meeting
began in the following way:]
Bruce Moaw walks over and
shakes my hand [recalled
Gravano]. He opened the car
door and I got in. I told him, "Are
you Moaw?" He says, "Yes," and
I said, "I heard you were from
Iowa."

He said that was right and I
said, "Well, if I got to trust some-
body, it might as well be some-
body from Iowa." And off we
went.

SAMMY "THE BULL"

GRAVANO in Peter Maas, *Underboss*
(New York: Harper, 1997), p. 466.
Suggested by Ryan McAdam.

For many years I believed that I remembered help-
ing my grandfather drink his whisky toddy when I
was six weeks old but I do not tell about that any
more now; I am grown old and my memory is not as
active as it used to be. When I was younger I could
remember anything, whether it had happened or
not; but my faculties are decaying now and soon I
shall be so I cannot remember any but the things
that never happened.

SAMUEL LANGHORNE CLEMENS

The Autobiography of Mark Twain. Charles Neider, arr.
NY: Harper and Brothers, 1959, p. 3.

...if you see him [the writer Hart
Crane] speak to him for me I am
very fond of him he is so sweet
he might almost come from
Iowa...

GERTRUDE STEIN in a letter dated
17 July 1929, in Edward Burns, editor, *The
Letters of Gertrude Stein and Carl Van
Vechten* (New York: Columbia University
Press, 1986), p. 199.

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Ballast does not have a budget as such. For nearly 15 years, it has operated at a financial loss. Such losses are currently offset by contributions from enlightened subscribers and generous deductions from the paycheck of the Reader Service Slug. If anyone is foolishly philanthropic (foolish because such gifts are surely not tax deductible), we will sometimes accept a check.

Ballast has a collaborative affiliation with *Leonardo: Journal of the International Society of Arts, Sciences, and Technology* (MIT Press). As a result, some of the book reviews in *Ballast* are reprinted either on the *Leonardo* web site at <<http://mitpress.mit.edu/e-journals/leonardo/home.html>> or in the printed magazine.

ALAN AYCKBOURN

My mother used to say, Delia, if S-E-X ever rears its ugly head, close your eyes before you see the rest of it.

Iowa—
corn-fed
absoluteness—
want to be one
big family—
to have a
"crowd"—our
"crowd" etc.—
their "crowd."

THOMAS WOLFE

The Notebooks of Thomas Wolfe.
Volume 2. Edited
by Richard S.
Kennedy and
Paschal Reeves
(Chapel Hill:
University of North
Carolina Press,
1970), p. 558.

COVER

Pencil
drawings
by Iowa-based
illustrator
GARY
KELLEY
(1999).

GOODMAN ACE

The best cure
for hypochondria
is to forget
about your
own body and
get interested
in someone
else's.

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